

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MASS, PINT, CB

SUBJECT: EXPANSION OF AUTO- DEFENSE EFFORTS

1. SUMMARY. THE ENEMY' S BURNING OF VILLAGES IN THE PROXIMITY OF THE CAPITAL CITY AND THE AS YET DISAPPOINTING RESULTS OF FANK RECRUITMENT EFFORTS HAVE LED THE GKR TO PLACE INCREASED EMPHASIS ON AUTO- DEFENSE. A DIRECTIVE HAS IN FACT BEEN SENT TO ALL REGIONAL AND SUB- DISTRICT COMMANDERS TO ISSUE ALL AVAILABLE ARMS TO VILLAGERS. IN THE MEANTIME, THE AUTO- DEFENSE PROGRAM HAS HAD TO COMPETE WITH VISIONARY, INFLATIONARY PLANNING BY BOTH PRIME MINISTER IN TAM AND HIS SUPPORTERS ON THE ONE HAND AND PRESIDENT LON NOL AND HIS TEAM ON THE OTHER TO CREATE AN EXPANDED POLICE FORCE AND A PAID MILITIA. WE HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGING A RAPID BUT ORDERLY EXPANSION OF AUTO- DEFENSE AND HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT POLITICALLY INSPIRED POLICE AND MILITIA PROGRAMS WILL NOT RPT NOT HAVE OUR SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

2. JUNE INSPECTIONS BY EMBASSY POL- MIL AND LENA REPRESENTATIVES OF AUTO- DEFENSE UNITS COMPETING FOR SUPPORT UNDER THE 50- KHMER PILOT PROJECT CONFIRMED EARLIER IMPRESSION THAT AUTO- DEFENSE IS NOW BEING GIVEN A VERY HIGH PRIORITY IN MOST PROVINCES. THIS RENEWED INTEREST HAS BEEN EVIDENTLY STIMULATED BY A POOR RESPONSE TO FANK' S RESUMPTION

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OF RECRUITMENT AND BY THE REALIZATION THAT THE ENEMY IS ATTEMPTING TO PRESS HIS OFFENSIVE HOME. WITHIN THE 10 PROVINCES INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAM, 586 UNITS WITH A TOTAL STRENGTH OF 21,880 MEN HAVE BEEN ORGANIZED IN 62 KHUMS. BY THE TIME ROUTE 4 WAS CUT BY THE ENEMY (WHICH TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED AUTO- DEFENSE INSPECTIONS), APPROXIMATELY 7,5000 INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS HAD BEEN ISSUED TO THESE UNITS.

3. THE ENEMY' S FORCING THOUSANDS OF VILLAGERS TO FLEE THEIR HOMES IN THE ROUTE 4 AREA APPARENTLY LED LON NOL TO ORDER AN ACCELERATION AND REVISION OF THE PROGRAM. HE DIRECTED FIRST THAT, UPON THE REOPENING OF ROUTE 4, REFUGEES FROM THE AREA BE RETURNED AND ORGANIZED INTO AUTO- DEFENSE UNITS. HE LIKEWISE DIRECTED ENCIRCLED CITIES SUCH AS SVAY RIENG AND KOMPONG THOM TO ARM SIVILIANS AND INCORPORATE THEM INTO PERIMETER DEFENSES. FINALLY THE GENERAL STAFF ON THE MARSHAL' S COMMAND SENT AN INSTRUCTION TO ALL REGIONAL AND SUBDISTRICT COMMANDERS TO ISSUE ALL THEIR STOCKS OF INDIVIDUAL ARMS TO CIVILIANS WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN A " SURFACE DEFENSE FORCE" AND TO REPORT IF ADDITIONAL WEAPONS ARE REQUIRED FOR THIS PURPOSE.

4. WHILE THESE DIRECTIVES MAY APPEAR TO CONTAIN AN ELEMENT OF PANIC , WE BELIEVE MOST COMMANDERS WILL USE GOOD JUDGMENT IN IMPLEMENTING THEM. FANK CHIEF OF STAFF MG SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ AND DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF MG HOU HANGSIN HAVE ASSURED US THAT AUTO- DEFENSE UNITS ON ROUTE 4 WILL BE FORMED ONLY IN CLOSEST PROXIMITY TO TERRITORIAL FORCES. KOMPONG THOM GOVERNOR BG TEAP BEN TOLD US THAT HE WILL IGNORE THE DIRECTIVE IN VIEW OF THE REDUCED ENEMY THREAT IN THIS AREA AND THE NEED AT THIS TIME FOR CIVILIAN TO CONCEN- TRATE ON PLANTING CRITICALLY NEEDED RICE. OTHER GOVERNORS IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES WILL PROBABLY DO LIKWISE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE DIRECTIVE MAY PERMIT MR-6 COMMANDER NOP PARAMOUN TO OBTAIN ARMS FOR CIVILIANS WHO HAVE ALREADY BEEN PARTICIPATING ON A PART TIME BASIS IN SVAY RIENG' S DEFENSE, AND IT WOULD ALLOW THE SIEM REAP ADMINISTRATION TO ARM SEVERAL UNITS ALREADY FORMED BUT FOR WHOM WEAPONS HAVE NOT BEEN AVAILABLE. IN THIS RESPECT, WE HAVE ASKED LENA OFFICIALS TO ENSURE THAT ORGANIZED UNITS IN THE PROXIMITY OF TERRITORIAL FORCES BE GIVEN FIRST PRIORITY.

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5. CONCURRENT WITH THE ABOVE MOVES, CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE CABINET HAVE BEEN PUSHING A PLAN TO REMOVE VILLAGE DEFENSE FROM THE SUPERVISION OF THE GENERAL STAFF BY CREATING A MILITIA TO BE SUPPORTED BY AN ENLARGED POLICE FORCE UNDER THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. THIS PLAN, WHICH ORIGINATED WITH PRIME MINISTER IN TAM, HAS ALSO BEEN PUSHED BY MINISTER

OF INTERIOR HEM KETHSANA, WHO WITH THE MARSHAL'S CONCURRENCE IS APPARENTLY ATTEMPTING TO PREEMPT IN TAM IN THIS AREA. WE HAVE LEARNED FROM MINISTER OF PLANS KHY TAING LIM THAT THE CABINET ON JUNE 14 APPROVED " IN PRINCIPLE" THE EXPANSION OF THE POLICE TO FORM A " SURFACE DEFENSE" FORCE OF 35,000 MEN AND THE CREATION OF A MILITIA OF UNSPECIFIED STRENGTH, THE MEMBERS OF WHICH WERE TO BE PAID 3,500 RIELS PER MONTH. NO IMPLEMENTING ACTION HAS TO OUR KNOWLEDGE BEEN TAKEN. WE RECENTLY LEARNED THAT THESE PLANS, WHICH ALONG WITH EFFORTS TO REPLACE MILITARY GOVERNORS ARE DESIGNED TO LESSEN FANK'S AUTHORITY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, WERE THE REASON THAT FANK'S REQUESTS FOR INCLUSION OF AUTO- DEFENSE FUNDS IN THE BUDGET HAVE BEEN REJECTED.

6. WE HAVE EMPHASIZED TO THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND TO ALL OTHER MINISTERS INVOLVED IN THIS MANEUVER THAT THEY CAN EXPECT NO SUPPORT FOR AN AUTO- DEFENSE PROGRAM WHICH IS NOT SUBORDINATED TO FANK AND THEREBY ASSURED OF A REACTION FORCE, THAT WE WOULD NOT IN ANY EVENT SUPPORT A PROGRAM WHICH IS NOT COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY, AND THAT THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL PAID TO CARRY ARMS, WHETHER THEY BE MILITIA OR A NEW POLICE " SURFACE DEFENSE" FORCE, SHOULD NOT EXCEED THE CEILING OF 253,000. IN A JUNE 19 MEETING WITH THE MINISTERS OF INTERIOR AND FINANCE, WE WERE ASSURED THAT THE FANK'S REQUIREMENT FOR RIELS 30 MILLION TO FINANCE THE AUTO- DEFENSE TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT WILL BE INCLUDED IN A SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION TO BE APPROVED BY THE END OF THE MONTH, THEREBY PERMITTING US TO RELEASE COUNTERPART FUNDS.

7. COMMENT: WHILE A SENSE OF URGENCY COMBINED WITH INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL AMBITIONS HAVE CAUSED THE GKR TO TAKE SOME HASTY AND MISDIRECTED ACTIONS, THERE IS FORWARD MOVEMENT IN AUTO- DEFENSE AND WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS NOW UNDER CONTROL OF RESPONSIBLE FANK OFFICERS. WE SHALL CONTINUE TO WATCH

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CLOSELY DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS AREA.
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